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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003113

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SUBJECT: DULAME AND RUBAIE DISUCSS IRAQI SECURITY WITH
AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and

(d)

1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. On July 24 at the dinner table, Ambassador discussed Iraq's short-term security challenges with Iraq's National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie and Minister of Defense Sadoun al-Dulame. The latter identified the ITG's primary objectives as delivering security to Iraq's citizens, implementing a powerful public relations campaign, pursuing economic development, and ensuring that the electoral process advances on time at an appropriate level of security. While the Ambassador and his guests concurred in this list of goals, opinions varied on how best to achieve them. Major debate centered on the role of militias and "neighborhood watch" groups, elimination of government subsidies to meet IMF conditionality, and the likelihood of Sunni Arabs voting in the constitutional referendum and elections.

2. SUMMARY AND COMMENT continued: The lack of trust between Dulame, a Sunni, and Rubaie, a Shia, was evident. While both were forthcoming when questioned, Dulame seemed particularly reticent to speak frankly on issues like the meager defense budget and MoD's failure to pay troop life support costs. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

ADVANCING SECURITY

3. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad hosted a dinner at his residence for Iraq's National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie and Minister of Defense Sadoun al-Dulame on July 24. In attendance were DCM Satterfield, MFN-I CG Casey, MG Findley, IRMO Senior Advisor Yellin, and Pol-Mil Counselor Litt.

4. (C) Rubaie said a newly formed joint committee, which he chairs and which is charged with developing a conditions-based strategy for transferring security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces, is key to improving security in Iraq. He asserted that the gradual withdrawal of Coalition Forces from secure Iraqi neighborhoods will inspire citizens in the less secure areas to cease their support of insurgents in order to free themselves also from the Coalition Forces. The Ambassador and General Casey agreed and offered appropriate assistance.

5. (C) Rubaie acknowledged the importance of disbanding the militias, but said it is politically difficult to do so. As an alternative, he is considering the feasibility of recommending armed or unarmed "neighborhood watch" groups. General Casey expressed his doubts about such groups, and the Ambassador asked what might be done to ensure that these groups not last forever. The Ambassador recalled the negative consequences that had flowed from warlordism in Afghanistan. They proved to be the infrastructure for a civil war and an obstacle to building a successful Afghanistan. Pol-Mil Counselor added that the ITG's refusal to address the militia problem forthrightly might send the unintended message to the public that the government is not capable of protecting the people.

6. (C) Having arrived late for the dinner, Dulame was not present for this part of the evening's discussion. However, before departing, he pulled DCM Satterfield aside and warned that the ITG's failure to deal with the militias, coupled with ongoing Operation Thunder inside Baghdad, could be the last straw for many Sunni Arabs. The same can be said for armed or unarmed "neighborhood watches". Too many Sunni Arabs, he argued, are convinced that the USG and the ITF are blatantly anti-Sunni Arab. Earlier that day, Dulame had confided to Pol-Mil Counselor that he will resign from the ministry if the problem of militias is not resolved.

Bringing the Message to the People

7. (C) Rubaie emphasized the Iraqi government's need to undertake a serious information outreach/public relations campaign. He opined that the Iraqis, including the leaders, rely solely on the media for information, and the media report only disasters, not progress. According to Rubaie, the media distortion is so bad that even the PM believes

"he's on the verge of loosing control." Rubaie has ordered his staff to find ways to give Iraqi citizens an accurate picture.

18. (C) Rubaie's strategy would require each of the fifty ministers and top-level officials in the ITG to give televised speeches every week. The Ambassador responded positively and asked why Iraq's leaders do not speak out publicly. Rubaie replied that many of the leaders do not want to associate themselves with the fledgling government. In addition, the ITG's media outreach capacity is limited. Although Dulame is now bringing media reps along with him on troop visits to report on progress, he mused that media embeds perhaps do more harm than good, judging from current television coverage.

19. (C) General Casey reaffirmed the importance of getting accurate information out not only to the Iraqi citizens, but also to the Iraqi leaders. With that in mind, he said his staff will begin to provide a daily operations and intelligence update to the PM's Chief of Staff, Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Tamimi, to keep al-Ja'afari informed. He recommended that Rubaie invite the PM to his office once or twice a week to learn directly from Rubaie what is going on in the field. Rubaie agreed, noting that he currently provides a daily intel report to the PM, and oversees intergovernmental bodies to ensure that information is coordinated and disseminated to senior officials.

MoD Update

10. (C) Ambassador asked Dulame for a status report on the Iraqi security forces. Dulame, appreciating the Coalition's support, said their capability is improving, but he foresees a long road ahead. When asked if paying life support and salaries remained a problem, he answered "no" and insisted payments continue to be made on time. Responding to General Casey's glance of playful skepticism, he quickly added, "at least for the next two months."

11. (C) Asked how many former regime officers serve in the MoD, Dulame replied about 20 percent of its personnel. He added that the CPA policy of dismissing all Iraqis in the military had only added to the insurgency. Dulame estimates that about 50 percent of the insurgents are former military personnel who are clearly running the insurgency operations. Dulame predicted that the number of insurgents will drop by 50 percent once a pension program for military veterans is approved by the TNA and implemented. Rubaie concurred, but thought the percentage a bit high.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

12. (C) Dulame and Rubaie agree that advancing economic development is critical to undermining the insurgency. DCM Satterfield raised the importance of infrastructure security, pointing out that the northern pipeline could handle between 400,000 - 600,000 barrels a day if it were secured and operating at full capacity. When asked why many Iraqis fail to make the connection between the lack of electric power or income from oil and the insurgents' sabotage, Rubaie answered Iraq's culture explains the disconnect. After decades of tyranny and abuse, Iraqis have come to distrust and despise government. Resolving these problems, whatever the cause, is the government's responsibility. It has not done so, and so it is to blame.

13. (C) The Ambassador raised the issue of the desirability of reducing fuel and food subsidies to meet IMF conditions for a stand-by agreement. The DCM pointed to the IMF's September deadline and the need for formal ITG approval of these measures, although it is not clear to what extent the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly has to act on them. Dulame and Rubaie rejoined by strongly opposing a revision or a public discussion of the fuel or food subsidies before January 2006. Both argued that doing so would be political dynamite, would feed the insurgency, and would retard the electoral process. Rubaie wondered whether monetizing the subsidies might give Iraq breathing space. The DCM responded that the concept merits consideration.

ELECTORAL PROCESS

14. (C) All agreed on the importance of keeping the electoral process on track. General Casey and MoD Dulame warned that the intimidation campaign leading up to the elections will be intense. The Coalition and Iraqi Forces are formulating a plan of action to counter it. Dulame conjectured that there will not be enough security for all areas, a point General Casey disagreed with. The ITG should renew the emergency

measures that had helped secure last January's election, he said.

15. (C) General Casey discussed the strategy for the election period, which entails isolating the foreign terrorists and extremists from the fractious and restive Sunni Arab rejectionists, and countering the former Ba'athist hardliners. Dulame and Rubaie agreed with this strategy, but Dulame cautioned that former Ba'athists will be very active. He explained that their objective is to disrupt the coming elections at all costs, particularly because they failed so miserably last time. He went on that the stated goal of the Ba'athists is to make the country so ungovernable that the USG, out of frustration, will turn to them as the only group that can bring peace to Iraq. Rubaie concurred.

16. (C) Dulame, reflecting the minority opinion, argued that the Sunni Arabs will not turn out to vote. While many Sunnis may be telling Mission and Coalition representatives that many Sunnis will vote, many more will stay home out of fear. Rubaie countered by saying that Sunni Arabs will not vote "no" on the constitutional referendum; therefore, any Sunni absence will be immaterial. The electoral system will favor whoever shows up to vote even if the absolute numbers are small.

17. (C) COMMENT: The difference in views and the lack of trust between Dulame and Rubaie was evident. While both men engaged in the dinner discussion, Dulame, a Sunni Arab from Ar-Ramadi, seemed particularly reticent to answer questions in the presence of his Shi'a colleague. Dulame has also been reluctant to appear before the media to publicize the need to end the insurgency and unite the nation. Deeply committed to this idea, he nonetheless is among the staunchest opponents of Sunni Arab violence and extremism. He feels equally strong about the need to eliminate independent Shia and Kurd militias. END COMMENT
Khalilzad